

Message Text

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70

ACTION PM-04

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R 240152Z AUG 76

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 6088

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: AS, US, MARR

SUBJ: OMEGA AUSTRALIA

REF: STATE 207836 (202118Z AUG 76)

1. THE PROPOSAL TO CONSTRUCT AN OMEGA STATION IN AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN ATTRACTING LEFT WING OPPOSITION FOR A LONG TIME. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, A NUMBER OF OMEGA OPPONENTS HAVE ARGUED THAT AN OMEGA STATION HERE MIGHT BE A NUCLEAR TARGET IN SOME FUTURE WAR.

2. OPPOSITION TO OMEGA IS LED BY A GROUP OF LEFTISTS, SOME OF WHOM ARE NOMINALLY AFFILIATED WITH THE ALP AND OTHERS WHO ARE NOMINALLY AFFILIATED WITH THE ALP AND OTHERS WHO ARE OUT AND OUT COMMUNISTS. THEIR OPPOSITION TO OMEGA MAY BE A DEVICE TO BUILD UP SUPPORT TOWARDS MOVES TO BAN ALL US FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA.

3. THE BUILDERS LABORERS FEDERATION (BLF) AND THE BUILDING
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WORKERS INDUSTRIAL UNION (BWIU) HAVE JURISDICTION OVER THE

CONSTRUCTION OF ALMOST ALL BUILDINGS AND RELATED FACILITIES IN AUSTRALIA. BOTH UNIONS ARE LED BY COMMUNISTS - THE BLF BY NORM GALLAGHER WHO IS PRO-CHINESE - THE BWIU BY PAT CLANCY WHO IS PRO-RUSSIAN. BOTH MEN AND THEIR UNIONS HAVE THREATENED TO PLACE A BLACK BAN UPON THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN OMEGA STATION. BRIEFLY PUT, THIS MEANS THAT MEMBERS OF THEIR UNIONS WILL NOT WORK ON OMEGA AND THEY WILL USE THEIR UNION CONNECTIONS TO QTE DISCOURAGE END QTE OTHER UNIONS FROM ASSISTING IN ITS CONSTRUCTION. WHILE WE CANNOT ASSESS WITH ANY DEGREE OF ACCURACY HOW EFFECTIVE SUCH A BLACK BAN COULD BE, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT A SIMILAR BAN HAS PREVENTED THE CONSTRUCTION OF A POWER PLANT IN VICTORIA FOR OVER FOUR YEARS.

4. IN RECENT MONTHS THE ALP PREMIER OF TASMANIA, A TIMID MAN WHO IS UNDERPRESSURE FROM THE LEFT WING OF THE TASMANIAN PARTY, ANNOUNCED THAT HE DOESN'T WANT AN OMEGA STATION CONSTRUCTED IN TASMANIA BECAUSE IT MIGHT MAKE TASMANIA A NUCLEAR TARGET. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE GOA WILL PRESS FOR A TASMANIAN SITE UNLESS THERE IS A CHANGE IN THE STATE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, EARLY ELECTIONS IN TASMANIA ARE A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY.

5. AS WE HAVE INDICATED PREVIOUSLY, WE CANNOT PREDICT WHAT THE LIKELY OUTCOME OF AN AGREEMENT TO BUILD AN OMEGA STATION HERE WILL BE UNTIL A SITE HAS BEEN SELECTED AND THE VARIOUS SUPPORTERS AND OPPONENTS HAVE REACTED TO THE PROPOSAL. WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT A DECISION ON THE PART OF THE USG AND THE GOA TO PRESS AHEAD WITH OMEGA WILL CAUSE MAJOR PROBLEMS INCLUDING THE POSSIBILITY OF A HEAD-ON CONFRONTATION WITH COMMUNIST-LED TRADE UNIONS AND THEIR RADICAL POLITICAL SUPPORTERS. THERE IS ALSO A DISTINCT POSSIBILITY THAT AFTER HAVING PROVOKED THE CONTROVERSY BOTH GOVERNMENTS WILL BE UNABLE TO GET THE FACILITY CONSTRUCTED. THIS WOULD BE A MAJOR DEFEAT FOR THE GOA AND WOULD GREATLY ENCOURAGE THESE ELEMENTS HERE WHO WANT ALL US FACILITIES REMOVED FROM AUSTRALIA.

6. CONFIRMING ADVICE FROM AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY CITED IN PARA 1 OF REFTEL, WE WERE TOLD THAT THE SAME TIME BY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS, WHO HAVE SUPERVISION OF OMEGA, CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT WE COULD EXPECT ACTION TOWARD DEFINITE LOCATION AND CONSTRUCTION PLANNING ABOUT MID-JUNE. IN FOLLOW-UP ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO THEY INDICATED WE WOULD BE RECEIVING FURTHER WORD VERY SOON. WE ARE SURPRISED NOT TO HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED PRIOR TO DISPATCH OF LETTER REFERRED TO IN PARA 1 OF REFTEL.

7. WE WILL OF COURSE CONSULT WITH THE GOA TO OBTAIN ITS CURRENT VIEWS, AND WILL ADVISE SOONEST.

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Message Attributes

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